

# Fort Davis

## National Historic Site

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



Curriculum Materials Grades 9-12

Student Activity: War in West Texas

LESSON: War in West Texas – A Clash of Cultures

Summary: Students analyze the 1880 “Grierson’s Report of Operations Against Victorio.” Students work with a partner to read this document and answer the questions on the worksheet.

Guiding Question: How did the United States Army respond to American Indians?

Objectives:

Students will—

- Use primary source documents to understand how Fort Davis and other U.S. Army forts played a role in western expansion
- Recognize the hostility that existed between American Indians and the United States military, which was—at the behest of the U.S. government—trying to make the West safe for travelers, freight wagons, and the U.S. mail.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of excerpts from Grierson’s “*Report on Operations Against Victorio*” with map (3 pages).
- Copies of worksheet (1 page)

Procedure:

- Students will read alone or with a partner excerpts from “Grierson’s Report on Operations Against Victorio” to understand the pivotal role of forts in the west [Note: At the time of this report, Grierson was stationed at Fort Concho. Less than two years later, he became commander of Fort Davis.]
- After reading, students will answer questions

National Social Studies Standards:

*III. Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of people, places, and environments.*

*V. Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions.*

*VI. Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of how people create and change structures of power, authority, and governance.*

## KEY

### *Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson's 1880 Report on Operations Against Victorio*

**1. What type of source is this? Primary or secondary, explain why.**

This is a primary source because it is a firsthand account of events that took place, written by someone who was there.

**2. What types of technology did Colonel Grierson rely on in his report?**

Telegraph; he probably used a compass

**3. What is the emergency Colonel Grierson is addressing? [Note: Grierson and a small group of his men were encamped by a strategic waterhole named Tinaja De Las Palmas, near present day Sierra Blanca, Texas—88 miles east of El Paso. The approximately 100 Apaches were coming from Mexico and heading to New Mexico where their families & friend lived; they were no doubt heading to the waterhole for water and did not initially expect to encounter soldiers.] Get a modern map and locate Mexico, Fort Davis, Fort Concho, Tinaja De Las Palmas, and the Mescalero Agency in New Mexico.**

Apaches are attacking. He needs reinforcements! There's a lot of Apaches and just a few soldiers.

**4. How did geography play a role in Grierson's fight with Victorio?**

Lack of water forced Victorio to attack Grierson's position. For the soldiers long distances form supply points, no direct communication with other military unites.

**5. Who was Victorio? Why was he trying to reach the Mescalero Apache Agency in New Mexico Territory? Imagine the story from the Apaches' point of view. [Note: Victorio was killed in Mexico by Mexican troops in October 1880.]**

Victorio was an Apache leader; he was a Warm Springs Apache. Apaches at the "Mescalero Agency" would supply food and ammunition to outlaw bands. Looking at this from the standpoint of the Apaches, they were being "crunched" by white civilization steadily encroaching on and attempting to destroy their traditional way of life.

**6. Is this the way you pictured a battle between the Apaches and U.S. Army? Explain.**

Answers will vary. People's ideas are often strongly influenced by Hollywood movies.